

A LEGEND CALLED LIL PRESS

Executive Director of the Governor's Scholars Program 1983-1992

By Aristofanes Cedeño

By now, many of you have heard that our founding Executive Director, Lil Press, passed away on Sunday, April 26th.

Lil is a legend! She is not only the founding Executive Director of the Governor's Scholars Program; she is our Founding Mother. Obviously, she was the mastermind behind the creation of the non-for-profit organization known as the GSP, a State-related organization with the mission of enhancing Kentucky's next generation of civic and economic leaders; but her true legacy is the conception of the philosophy that supports the mission and vision of the program, the creation of a community of learners. That concept of community still permeates the magic that takes place every summer.

Personally, I met Lil during the Spring Planning Retreat for faculty in 1992. She had just announced retirement. From her words, I vividly remember her passion for young leaders, her interest in fostering a community of citizens concerned for the common good, and her commitment to the future of Kentucky.

The GSP honored Lil in several occasions in the last seven years. She was invited to attend a final ceremony on one of our campuses in 2013. After the ceremony, she picked up her phone and called Len, her long-time husband and partner, and with tears in her eyes, said "Len, my dream is still the same." In 2016, she was recognized at the premier of our documentary Igniting the Flame of Curiosity, dedicated to her. Also, in the Fall of 2016, the GSP honored her at the National Conference of Governor's Schools (NCoGS) in Louisville, which we were hosting that year. "Without Lil Press, there would be no NCoGS. It is as simple as that," says Ted Tarkow, a cofounder of the NCoGS from Missouri.

To paraphrase Mr. Tarkow's words, it was her visionary leadership that led to the creation of NCoGS in 1987, at a gala meeting in Lexington, at which she presided with energy, ideas, and commitment. These same qualities she had brought for several years to the Kentucky Governor's Scholars Program, and to public partners throughout her state that shared her conviction that bright and motivated kids deserve to be immersed in summer programs that focus on intellectual, academic and personal growth and development.

After her husband Len, founding Executive Director of KET, passed away last year, Lil had moved to the State of Washington to be closer to their only son. Our current enemy took her away from us, but her legend lives forever in the spirit of the Governor's Scholars Program.

Lil's obituary can be found [here](#).

The attached pictures include: a) Lil Press's photo in the GSP-Centre Mug Book of 1983, the first year of the Program; b) Lil Press' last Mug Book photo in the summer of 1991; c) Lil Press at the National Conference of Governor's Schools in Pittsburg, PA, in 2004, accompanied by the Kentucky delegation comprised of Aris Cedeño, then the Academic Dean of the GSP, and Associate Campus Directors Bryan Rich (GSP-NKU '96) and Patrick Noltemeyer; d) Governor's Scholars in the Journalism and Mass Media Focus Area paid a visit to Lil and Len Press in the summer of 2017; and e) [a clip from our documentary Igniting the Flame of Curiosity featuring Lil Press](#).



Lil Press's photo in the GSP-Centre Mug Book of 1983, the first year of the Program;



Lil Press' last Mug Book photo in the summer of 1991



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